

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 IO-14 CU-05 DRC-01

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R 161620Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6865

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 5754

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TS

SUBJECT: DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) NINTH CONGRESS:
OVERVIEW

REF: TUNIS 5705, 5590, A-123

1. SUMMARY: THE CONGRESS OF CLARITY WENT ALL BOURGUIBA'S WAY. THERE WAS ENOUGH LEEWAY FOR DELEGATES TO SPEAK THEIR MIND, BUT NOT ENOUGH FOR THEM TO GET DOWN TO FUNDAMENTALS. THE LEADERSHIP'S PLANS FOR PARTY AND GOVERNMENT REFORM WERE ENDORSED, BOURGUIBA WAS UNANIMOUSLY NAMED (PARTY) PRESIDENT FOR LIFE, AND THE CONGRESS TOOK ITS CUE FROM ITS LEADERS IN VOTING KEY "LIBERAL" FIGURES OUT OF THE PARTY ALTOGETHER. FOR THE MOST PART, CONGRESS WAS A DULL EVENT, MAKING ENTIRELY CLEAR THAT BOURGUIBA, AND ONLY BOURGUIBA, IS VERY MUCH IN CHARGE. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE CONGRESS OF CLARITY ENDED EARLY MORNING

SEPTEMBER 16 WITH ELECTION OF NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE (SEPTEL). BOURGUIBA HIMSELF WAS PRESENT FOR MUCH OF GENERAL DEBATE, AND CONDUCT OF CONGRESS AND ITS RESULTS REPRESENT OUTSTANDING PERSONAL TRIUMPH FOR HIM AND BY REFLECTION, FOR PRI MIN NOUIRA AND OTHER KEY INSIDERS. BOURGUIBA FOLLOWED DEVELOPMENTS MINUTELY, INTERVENING PERSONALLY TO CORRECT DELEGATES GETTING OUT OF LINE, AND LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AND FULLY IN CHARGE OF THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY. "CLARITY", AS EXPECTED (TUNIS A123), TURNED OUT TO MEAN RIGID ADHERENCE TO BOURGUIBA'S WILL, AND UNANIMOUS DISAPPROBATION POURED ON THOSE WHOM BOURGUIBA INDICATED SHOULD BE SCORNED.

3. OLD PSD CONGRESS HANDS FOUND THE FOUR DAYS DULL. DELEGATES WERE PLACID, MILLING ABOUT OUTSIDE THE HALL TALKING OF THEIR OWN AFFAIRS, BUT NOT ABOUT THE PARTY. THE ACTIVE LOBBYING AND ARGUING OVER PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS THAT HAD MARKED THE 1971 CONGRESS WERE ALMOST ENTIRELY ABSENT. THOUGH SOME LITTLE-KNOWN FIGURES SEEKING ELECTION TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE WERE SHAKING HANDS WITH STRANGERS, ESTABLISHED POLITICIANS WERE IN SHORT SUPPLY IN THE CORRIDORS, LEADING TO CONCLUSION THEIR ELECTION HAD BEEN ASSURED.

4. THERE WAS DEMOCRATIC FLAVOR TO GENERAL DEBATE, IN THAT DELEGATES FELT FREE, AGAINST RULINGS OF CHAIRMAN, TO COMPLAIN OF MINOR, LOCAL PROBLEMS OR GOVERNMENT FAILINGS. HOWEVER NO ONE CARED TO QUESTION ANY MAJOR PROPOSITION PUT FORTH BY THE LEADERSHIP, AND CONGRESS WAS INTERRUPTED OFTEN BY CHEERS OF SUPPORT FOR BOURGUIBA AND SINGING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY HYMN, WHICH BOURGUIBA MORE THAN ONCE ROSE AND CONDUCTED, WAVING HIS HANDS AND SMILING BROADLY.

5. POLICEMEN WERE OMNIPRESENT, BOTH PLAINCLOTHESMEN AND UNIFORMED POLICE, IN ADDITION TO RED-SWEATSUITED "DESTOURIAN YOUTH" USHERS WHO WERE ALSO APPLAUSE
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LEADERS AND CROWD CONTROL EXPERTS. THOSE WHO COMMENTED ON THIS STRICT SECURITY AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS NOTING COMPARED WITH ARRANGEMENTS MADE AND SURVEILLANCE LAID ON FOR PUBLIC APPEARANCES BY MANY OTHER ARAB AND MIDDLEEASTERN LEADERS.

6. CONGRESS ADOPTED SERIES OF RESOLUTIONS, TEXTS OF WHICH ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE. FROM PARAPHRASES IN PRESS

SEPTEMBER 16, THE FOLLOWING RESULTS ARE CLEAR:

A. BOURGUIBA TO BE PRESIDENT OF PSD FOR LIFE,
AND CONSTITUTION TO BE AMENDED SO AS TO MAKE POSSIBLE
IMPLEMENTATION OF CONGRESS' DECISION HE SHOULD BE PRES-
IDENT OF TUNISIA FOR LIFE ALSO.

B. EXPULSION FROM THE PARTY OF SEVEN LEADING"
"LIBERALS" (SIGNERS OF MANIFESTO ISSUED TUNIS JUST
BEFORE CONGRESS OPENED) AND OF MOHAMED MASMOUDI, CITED
AS HAVING PROFITED IMPROPERLY FROM PUBLIC OFFICE. ALL
EIGHT WERE AMONG TOP VOTE GETTERS IN CENTRAL COMMITTEE
ELECTIONS 1971. THOSE EXPELLED INCLUDED BEJI CAID
ESSEBSI, SADOK BEN JOMAA, HABIB BOULARES, MOHAMED
SALAH BELHAJ, MOUAADDA, HASSIB BEN AMMAR AND
MOHAMED BEN AMARA. DELEGATE AHMED CHTROUOU, WHO SPOKE
AGAINST EXPULSION MOTION, WAS SAVED FROM EXPULSION HIM-
SELF BY INTERVENTION OF PRI MIN NOUIRA WHO SAID CHTOUROU
WAS PROPERLY SPEAKING WITHIN PARTY, UNLIKE OTHERS WHO
PLACED THEMSELVES OUTSIDE PARTY DIALOGUE.

7. APPARENTLY CONGRESS LIKEWISE ENDORSED LEADERSHIP'S
PROPOSAL TO CONFIRM PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLE 51
PROVIDING AUTOMATIC SUCCESSION BY PRIME MINISTER TO
VACANT PRESIDENCY, AND OTHER PROPOSALS (DESCRIBED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 5754

TUNIS A-123) ALLOWING PRESIDENT TO NAME HIS OWN POLITICAL BUREAU AND PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL FROM AMONG ELECTED CENTRAL COMMITTEEMEN; ESTABLISHING THAT ELECTED PARTY PRESIDENT IS AUTOMATICALLY THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR CHIEF OF STATE; AND CREATING AUTHORITY IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WHEREBY IT MAY CENSURE THE GOVERNMENT, ON THREE MONTHS' NOTICE TO PRESIDENT, WHO MAY AT THAT POINT DISMISS THE ASSEMBLY AND HOLD NEW ELECTIONS. OTHERPROPOSED CHANGES NOT FORESHADOWED OUR A-123 INCLUDE AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL REFERENDUM IN MATTERS NOT AFFECTING THE EXISTENCE OF THE REPUBLICAN REGIME, AND (APPARENTLY A PROPOSAL OF VERY RECENT ORIGIN) A PROPOSED NEW ELECTORAL LAW WHICH WILL "DEFINE THE CONDITIONS OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ENSURE THE PROGRESS OF THE STATE ON SOLID BASES, IN STABILITY AND COHESION." (THIS LANGUAGE MAY VEIL PSD DETERMINATION TO REWRITE ELIGIBILITY RULES IN VIEW OF UNPRECEDENTED CANDIDACY ANNOUNCED BY CHEDLI ZOUITEN, TUNIS 5678.)

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8. COMMENT: AS BOURGUIBA HAD PROMISED, (TUNIS 5590) THE CONGRESS OF CLARITY REALLY DID ERASE THE RESULTS OF THE 1971 MONASTIR CONGRESS, IN REJECTING THE PRINCIPLE OF AN ELECTED POLITICAL BUREAU AND BY SWEEPING FROM THE PARTY'S RANKS THE HANDFUL OF MEN WHO HAD BEEN AMONG THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LIBERAL LEADERS OF 1971. THE EXPULSION OF MASMOUDI, TO THE TUNE OF REVELATIONS OF HIS PERSONAL AND FAMILY ENRICHMENT, WOULD APPEAR TO REMOVE HIM FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE AS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR HIGH OFFICE IN GOT. BY CONTRAST, HEDI NOUIRA'S STAR, AND THAT OF MOHAMED SAYAH SEEM CLEARLY ASCENDANT. BOURGUIBA PUBLICLY RESTATED HIS CHOICE OF NOUIRA AS HIS "DAUPHIN", AND SAYAH, AS THE ORGANIZER OF THIS EVENT WHICH WENT JUST THE WAY THE PRESIDENT WANTED IT, MUST FEEL HE HAS REINFORCED BOURGUIBA'S AFFECTION FOR AND GRATITUDE TOWARD HIM. THE LONGER RANGE IMPACT OF THE RETRENCHMENT, AND THE SILENCING OF OPPOSITION VOICES, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. WHILE THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE HAS WATCHED WITH PLEASURE, ON TV, AS A DYNAMIC PRESIDENT ASSURED THEM ALL IS WELL, THE RESTLESS STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY AND OTHER INTELLECTUALS WILL HAVE WATCHED WITH DISMAY AS PROSPECTS FOR GENUINE LIBERALIZATION OF THE REGIME WENT GLIMMERING. (FURTHER COMMENT BY SEPTTEL).

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